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Fighter Against Qaddafi Betrayed

In a shameful act of self-serving treachery, one of America's closest Arab allies, Morocco's King Hassan, handed over a courageous Libyan dissident to that country's brutal dictator, Muammar Qaddafi. The betrayed anti-Qaddafi exile was beaten and kicked to death by the colonel's goons on the airport runway in Tripoli, according to U.S. intelligence sources.

The victim of this high-level sellout was Omar Muhayshi, a boyhood friend of Qaddafi and once a high-ranking official in the Libyan revolutionary regime before Qaddafi's insane excesses led Muhayshi to join the opposition and go into exile. For eight years, Qaddafi had tried everything to have his one-time friend assassinated, even offering an ex-CIA agent \$1 million to arrange Muhayshi's murder. The efforts failed, and Muhayshi thought he had found safe haven in Morocco.

Some sources believe Qaddafi's obsession with Muhayshi was the strongest motive for the colonel's treaty with Hassan last year. The betrayal of Muhayshi and his delivery to Qaddafi were part of the quid pro quo for cutting off Libyan aid to Polisario guerrillas battling Hassan for the western Sahara region. So both Muhayshi and the Polisarios learned to their sorrow the wisdom of the Biblical injunction: "Put not thy trust in princes."

According to a CIA report, Muhayshi turned sour on his longtime friend in 1974, when it became clear that Qaddafi was wasting Libya's oil wealth on a megalomaniacal dream of becoming the leader who would unite all Arab states under his rule. As a member of the 12-man Revolutionary Command Council, Muhayshi "had a stormy relationship with

Qaddafi . . . and often chafed under Qaddafi's high-handed ways," the CIA reported.

On Aug. 11, 1975, a plot by two council members and 20 military officers was aborted, and the conspirators went into hiding. Muhayshi escaped to Tunisia, but most of the others were rounded up and executed the following March. But as the CIA pointed out, the "Muhayshi plot" was a victory of sorts, because Qaddafi "lost his mystique as the 'unchallengeable' leader, an important underpinning for his brand of personal rule."

In exile, Muhayshi continued to irritate Qaddafi by publishing revealing memories of the unstable Libyan strong man and broadcasting radio attacks on him from Egypt and Tunisia. Eventually, Muhayshi was granted refuge in Morocco.

Other Libyan exiles warned Muhayshi two years ago that a deal might be cooking between Hassan and Qaddafi and that it might include him. But Muhayshi paid no heed.

To his horror, Muhayshi learned too late that he was part of the bargain. Whether Qaddafi's agents were allowed to kidnap him in Morocco, or whether the king's men put him on the plane, is not clear. But the result was the same. Our sources say that he was stomped to death as soon as he got off the plane in Tripoli.

The sources say untold numbers of other anti-Qaddafi exiles similarly were "extradited" to Libya to face the dictator's vengeance. The only reliably safe haven in the region seems to be Egypt, which remains determinedly opposed to Qaddafi and has an intelligence service sharp enough to thwart his plots against Libyan exiles.